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General Assembly
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Agenda item 108
Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Letter dated 24 April 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of an analysis entitled "Best practices in countering suicide terrorism" prepared by the Meeting of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies and Law Enforcement Organizations (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council, and of the General Assembly under item 108 of the agenda.

(*Signed*) P. **Iliichev**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

17-06973 (E) 030517 080517

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Annex to the letter dated 24 April 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and Russian]

Meeting of Heads of Special Services, Security Agencies, and Law-Enforcement Organizations

Best practices in countering suicide terrorism

As of today, terrorism is still posing a persistent threat to the security of individual persons, society and the State. The tactic of using suicide operatives in terrorist attacks has become a common phenomenon in different parts of the world.

The following suicide attack scenarios are the most common:

- attacks planned and perpetrated by stand-alone terrorists ("lone wolves") whose motivations may vary as they are conditioned by the extent of individual radicalization and susceptibility to pseudo-ideology;
- terrorist attacks masterminded and operationally directed from within the ranks of international terrorist organizations based abroad (in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere) and perpetrated by operatives purposely deployed from the ongoing conflict zone to their countries of origin after having gained subversive expertise when fighting on the side of international terrorist groups;
- terrorist attacks masterminded and operationally directed from abroad (Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan etc.), and perpetrated by one or several sleeper cells whose members do not yet have combat experience with international terrorist organizations;
- terrorist attacks perpetrated by one or several individuals, either related or personally acquainted, who form the mainstay of small groups striving for credibility with leaders of international terrorist organizations as a guarantee of future deployment to a conflict zone abroad.

Some terrorist organizations view this tactic as one of the most effective instruments for attaining political goals. The spectacular terrorist attacks in New York (11 September 2001), Paris (13 November 2015) and Istanbul (12 January 2016), in which a suicide element was involved, are examples of that.

It is also of note that many of the modern-day terrorist organizations have been actively seeking chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons or related components; due to that circumstance, the possibility of suicide operatives being deployed in combination with the use of materials of this kind should never be ruled out.

An analysis of best practices derived from the routine experience of a number of national counterterrorism stakeholders was helpful in forming a comprehensive view of how security, intelligence and law-enforcement authorities counteract the practice of "suicide terror", which is so widespread among international terrorist organizations nowadays.

1. Those most susceptible to the ideology of ethnically- and religiously-motivated violence are: young people with an "underdeveloped" world view, who are inapt or reluctant to get integrated into society; individuals coming from socially-unprotected strata, whose urge to be involved with terrorism could be explained by a desire to support their relatives financially and materially with

incentives provided by terrorist organizations, rather than by religious fanaticism; and individuals previously convicted of committing serious crimes. Together, they form a recruitment base for terrorist organizations. According to **Kazakh** experts, youth is most susceptible to the ideology of ethnically- and religiously-motivated violence. Individuals of this category often develop radical views due to their belonging to socially-vulnerable ethnic groups/minorities of low socioeconomic status, combined with a lack of self-actualization opportunities and religious illiteracy.

2. The individuals most typically selected for carrying out suicide missions may be basically categorized as: adherents to extremist religious teachings; supporters of right-wing radical and leftist organizations; separatists; and relatives of killed militants who, according to "blood feud" traditions as well as religious dogmas instilled by extremists, have a personal obligation to avenge their kinsmen. According to **Sudanese** experts, despite the difficulty of uncovering those people, professionalism and accumulative experience can help in doing so.

3. The following methods and techniques are most commonly used by terrorist organizations for the purpose of recruitment (including in a suicide operative capacity): sparking religious and ethnic intolerance; ideological indoctrination, including from a remote location (either by telephone or via the Internet); portraying terrorists in a positive light; material incentives; and creating a certain image of a perceived enemy. According to experts of the **People's Republic of China**'s Ministry of Public Security, terrorist organizations typically use Internet-based facilities for the dissemination of audio and video materials or musical recordings for the purposes of recruitment; Internet-based forums/platforms as well as mobile communications features are also used directly, when making contacts with recruitment targets or for other operational purposes. Terrorist recruiters gradually instill terrorism/extremism-supportive views in the mind of a target/"martyr" candidate, who is also being tactically instructed and directed to carry out a suicide mission afterwards.

4. The main factors facilitating the emergence and spread of suicide terrorism are as follows:

(a) terrorist groups and their financial benefactors, being keenly interested in promoting suicide terrorism, allocate considerable funds for the selection and training of *shaheeds* (martyrs), given that their attacks normally receive the broadest coverage in the media, evoking general panic and producing a negative impact on public morale; moreover, incidents of this type are very difficult to investigate; as **Romanian** experts pointed out, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) chooses this modus operandi in Syria and Iraq to have overall control and uses terror to achieve this purpose;

(b) experienced terrorists apply previously-tested selection ("talent spotting"), recruitment and training techniques with respect to prospective candidates for suicide missions, and also employ special methods of psychological indoctrination at the training camps set up for that purpose. According to **Serbian** experts, apart from a classical recruitment approach, based on exploiting the personal vulnerabilities of the members of a specific target group, terrorist organizations, relying on direct contacts via the mass-media and the Internet (social networks), as well as mobile messaging services, are finding ample opportunities to evoke the sympathies of certain individuals who are to be radicalized and recruited as suicide operatives;

(c) a growing number of individuals have an explicit desire to commit a suicide bombing attack, influenced by ongoing conflicts in Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan, broad dissemination of radical religious ideology, widespread video-

and audio-propaganda of terrorist attacks perpetrated by suicide operatives, along with a variety of other motivational factors typical of persons determined to commit suicide (living below the poverty line, incurable disease, depression, serious mental disorder, revenge etc.). According to **Hungarian** experts, as a result of radicalization via the Internet, there has been a significant increase in the number of people holding extremist views who can be trained by the terrorist organizations to commit suicide attacks, since they are not suitable for performing tasks requiring a higher level of capabilities.

5. The principal sources of financing of the international terrorist organizations making use of suicide operatives are: self-financing, based on the ISIL model (oil trade, levying taxes upon the population, smuggling, kidnappings for ransom); external support from state actors/governments exploiting terrorists as tools in attaining political goals; private donations (on the part of terrorist "sponsors", relatives of terrorists etc.). According to **Spanish** experts, in respect of this issue a distinction needs to be made between funding received from conflict zones, where terrorists operate more or less freely, and resources received from the West, where they are forced to develop a system of illegal money collection, including inside the Muslim community, and must hide its true purpose, which is to provide funds to terrorist groups.

6. The principal means of counteracting the use of suicide operatives by international terrorist organizations are as follows: promotion of international cooperation; improvement of counterterrorism legislation; countering the spread of terrorism-supportive ideology; timely identification of individuals with the potential for the commission of suicide attacks; elimination of conditions facilitating the spread of terrorism (preventive diplomacy or public outreach). **Slovene** experts, referring to the principal means of counteracting suicide terrorism, mentioned effective cooperation of all competent institutions at the national level as well as active and close international cooperation in the fight against terrorism. According to experts from the **United Arab Emirates**, the prohibition of suicide in Islam is an important means of institutional counteraction.

7. The following measures are believed to be the most effective in terms of counteracting terrorist groups and organizations making use of suicide operatives: expanding the scope of international cooperation facilitating the design of mechanisms for joint counterterrorist activities; developing a zero tolerance attitude towards terrorism among the general public, while broadening opportunities for receiving counterterrorism-related information from the public; organizing effective counteraction of the use of the Internet by international terrorist organizations as a medium of propaganda, proselytism and recruitment; detection and suppression of the activities carried out by emissaries (foreign agents) of international terrorist organizations, while endeavouring to discredit these activities; and building stronger capabilities for the proactive suppression of terrorist plots. According to **Slovak** experts, the most effective measures include strengthening international cooperation of security and intelligence services, sharing information on the use of the latest information technologies by terrorists, de-radicalization programmes, increasing public awareness and uncovering trafficking in arms.

8. The measures found to be most effective in terms of countering citizens' involvement in terrorist activity in a suicide operative capacity are as follows: strengthening cooperation with governments of foreign States and non-governmental organizations; improving basic standards of living and education of the population; imposing harsher regulatory and legal restrictions with respect to individuals involved in the preparation for and perpetration of suicide terrorist attacks; fostering the efforts of civil society institutions focused on enhancing public awareness of terrorism-related threats ("conscience awakening"); counter-propaganda activities

conducted on a regular basis and on a large scale; thwarting of efforts to exert an ideological influence on society; and exercising supervisory control over the education of imams and designing a set of criteria for assessing the level of their compliance with professional requirements. According to **Bulgarian** experts, measures for prevention of radicalization should include the involvement of educational institutions, social services, denominations, local authorities and communities, as well as counteraction of the narrative of terrorist organizations. Another important measure is a systematic enhancement of the expert capacity of law-enforcement bodies and intelligence and security services in the identification of terrorists, achieved through training, drills and information exchange and sharing of experience with partner services.

Thus, an impressive system of measures to counter suicide terrorism is being developed today. However, in view of the actual level of threats posed by this type of terrorism, which remains persistently high, there is a necessity to continue building on efforts in this regard.

Given that it is practically impossible to effectively forestall the actions of a suicide operative at the stage of perpetration of an attack, and the consequences of every "successful" attack are typically devastating, the primary efforts should be focused on preventive outreach work within the social milieus from which the ranks of suicide terrorists are replenished, as well as on detecting any indications pointing at preparations for terrorist attacks against specific targets. In this context, the activity of security and intelligence agencies should be based on an integrated approach, encompassing all the elements of the relevant system of countermeasures, namely: general (proactive) prevention of suicide terrorism; measures aimed specifically at the detection and suppression of terrorist activity involving a suicide element; and implementation of other measures of a managerial, institutional, legal and operational type as appropriate.

Most of the partners share the view that counteracting suicide terrorism necessitates drawing on the entire potential of security, intelligence, law-enforcement and other authorities participating in counterterrorism, as well as of civil society at the national, regional and, most importantly, international levels.

United Nations S/2017/350

Security Council

Distr.: General
25 April 2017

Original: English

Identical letters dated 25 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am writing upon the instructions of my Government to bring the following to your kind attention.

Terrorist organizations have been using safe havens in Syria and Iraq to generate financial resources, train militants and launch cross-border attacks. Their activities constitute a clear threat to regional stability and to the national security of Turkey.

The PKK terrorist organization and its affiliates continue to operate in Syria and Iraq, target Turkish citizens, violate Turkey's border security and infiltrate into Turkish territory from their hideouts in northern Iraq and northern Syria.

Hundreds of Turkish citizens fell victim to the suicide bombings carried out by PKK and affiliated terrorists that were trained in PKK/PYD/YPG-controlled areas in Syria and PKK camps in Iraq. The terrorists based in Syria have also launched and recently intensified cross-border attacks against Turkish border guards, using anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles, sniper and mortar shells.

Against this background, in the early hours of 25 April 2017, the Turkish Air Force undertook a military action on the positions of PKK and its affiliates in Sinjar, Iraq, and Karachuk, Syria, that were used directly and deliberately for targeting Turkey.

This measure was essential not only in terms of safeguarding Turkey's border security and national security in the exercise of its inherent right of self-defence as outlined in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, but also within the context of the responsibility attributed to States Members of the United Nations in the fight against terrorism.

I would like to underline that Turkey, being unequivocally committed to the territorial integrity and unity of Iraq and Syria, undertakes this measure with a view to contributing to and furthering these basic principles.

While conducting the operation, the Turkish Air Force surgically targeted PKK and its affiliates and took all the necessary precautions to avoid civilian losses.

I would be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feridun H. **Sinirlioğlu**
Permanent Representative

17-06635 (E) 270417

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United Nations A/ES-10/750–S/2017/351

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
8 May 2017

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 24 April 2017 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to attach herewith a letter written by Palestinian leader and parliamentarian, Marwan Barghouti, who is leading the largest hunger strike by more than 1,500 Palestinian prisoners and detainees in the prisons of Israel, the occupying Power (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter and its annex distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations

17-07381 (E) 120517

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Annex to the identical letters dated 24 April 2017 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

Letter from imprisoned Palestinian leader and parliamentarian Marwan Barghouti to his fellow parliamentarians around the world on the "Freedom & Dignity" hunger strike

Dear fellow parliamentarians,

If you are receiving this letter, it means that Israel has chosen to continue down the path of prohibited collective punishment and incitement against Palestinian prisoners rather than meeting their legitimate demands. It means that I was placed yet again in solitary confinement along with fellow hunger strikers. But we will not be silenced or surrender.

The hunger strike is a legitimate and peaceful means to protest the violations of our basic human rights as prisoners, as guaranteed under international law. Palestinian prisoners may be at the mercy of the occupying Power, and that is why they are protected under international humanitarian law; but they are not powerless. We resorted to this hunger strike after months of efforts to have our legitimate demands addressed. These demands concern the mass arbitrary arrest of Palestinians, torture and ill-treatment, punitive measures against prisoners, deliberate medical neglect and denial of family visits and contacts with our loved ones and education. These are human rights in their most basic form.

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

I salute your solidarity with your imprisoned Palestinian colleagues and the strong support of parliaments around the world for the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, and for the end of the occupation and the achievement of just and lasting peace based on international law.

I was the first parliamentarian to be arrested in 2002. Since then, Israel has arrested 70 parliamentarians, more than half of the Palestinian Legislative Council; 13 remain imprisoned today. This is an insult to parliamentarians everywhere, to democracy everywhere and to human rights everywhere. This is an insult to freedom and justice, and it must be answered.

The fate of Palestinian parliamentarians is a reflection of the fate of the people they represent. For over 50 years, Israel, the occupying Power, has arrested hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, the equivalent of 40 per cent of the male population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; 6,500 languish in Israeli jails today. For Israel, we are all guilty and our unspoken charges are that we desire freedom, are hungry for freedom and strive and sacrifice for freedom.

Israeli laws authorize colonialism, collective punishment, discrimination and apartheid. Shouldn't those who vote in favour of such laws be held accountable? Some Israeli parliamentarians have advocated our arrest. They are sitting among you, while we are unable to.

As for the Israeli courts, they are part and parcel of this colonial and military occupation, which aims at annexing our land and further displacing and replacing our people. Israeli military courts have a conviction rate for Palestinians that has ranged in recent years between 90 and 99 per cent, while Israelis committing crimes against Palestinians enjoy near absolute impunity. I say it yet again: this is a judicial apartheid whereby Palestinian existence and resistance is criminalized.

I was convicted by one of these illegitimate courts. I refused to recognize the court, even more so as an elected representative of the occupied people. I was sentenced to 5 life sentences and 40 years by the occupying Power's courts for terrorism, in what was denounced unanimously by international observers as a political show trial. Not a single country on earth accepted this verdict. This has been the fate of the leaders of liberation movements around the world and across history. The Rivonia trial, which condemned Mandela to a life sentence, did not delegitimize him or his struggle; it only further delegitimized the apartheid regime prosecuting him.

This is why the companion of Nelson Mandela and anti-apartheid icon Ahmed Kathrada launched the "Free Marwan Barghouti and all Palestinian Prisoners International Campaign", just as he had launched the "Free Mandela Campaign" before spending 26 years in apartheid jails himself. This is why he launched it from the cell of Nelson Mandela on Robben Island. This is why 8 Nobel Peace Prize laureates, 120 Governments and hundreds of parliamentarians, leaders, academics, artists, intellectuals and civil society organizations have joined the campaign. This is why two Nobel Peace Prize laureates, parliaments and parliamentarians have nominated me for the Nobel Peace Prize as an expression of support for the Palestinian people's struggle for freedom.

Palestinian prisoners have always suffered from injustice and violations of their rights. But in recent years, Israeli occupation authorities have even deprived us of rights acquired through prior hunger strikes. The escalation in punitive and inhumane measures against prisoners and their loved ones could not remain unanswered. We decided to go on hunger strike because we were left with no other choice. Palestinians suffer and sacrifice to be able to enjoy the rights they are entitled to and yet deprived of. Palestinian prisoners are no exception.

We have named this hunger strike "Freedom & Dignity". These are words that resonate deeply in the hearts of our nation, which has been struggling for 70 years for their realization. But they are also words that resonate around the world, as part of universal history and the struggle against all forms of oppression and servitude. They are values that are at the core of humanity and that are indispensable to the achievement of peace. There is no peace possible between the oppressor and the oppressed, as oppression and peace are mutually exclusive. There is no peace possible between the prisoner and the jailer. Freedom is the way to peace.

I call on you to speak up for those that Israel is trying to silence. I call on you to stand up for those thrown into dark cells to be forgotten. I call on you to support the legitimate demands of the Palestinian prisoners' movement and to uphold international law. I call on you to support the freedom and dignity of the Palestinian people, so peace can prevail.

Some may believe that this is the end of the story, and that I will perish here in solitary confinement. But I know, even in this forced solitude, that we are not alone. I know that millions of Palestinians and many more around the world stand with us. We shall meet soon, in freedom.

United Nations S/2017/352

Security Council

Distr.: General
2 May 2017
English
Original: Arabic

Identical letters dated 25 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the position of the Syrian Arab Republic on the thirty-eighth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016) (S/2017/339).

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms the points made in its previous responses to reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the aforementioned Security Council resolutions.

Regrettably, the Secretariat has kept in place a framework that ignores the real causes of Syrian suffering, the deterioration in living standards and the humanitarian situation. These problems are primarily attributable to terrorism; the unilateral coercive measures imposed on the Syrian people by the United States of America, the European Union and other States; and certain regional and international actors' relentless effort to prolong the crisis and obstruct efforts towards a peaceful political resolution through a Syrian-led political process which the United Nations has repeatedly endorsed. As a result, the conflict has been prolonged, and United Nations representatives have insisted on depicting the situation to global public opinion as a conflict among Syrian parties, rather than a proxy war waged by the Governments of Member States of the United Nations against the Syrian State through military interference, direct and blatant aggression, and the use of terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters.

The Syrian Government deplores the report's continuing attempt to ignore the key role played by the Syrian State and Syrian institutions. Despite enormous challenges, the latter have made great strides in providing subsistence and basic services to the Syrian people throughout the country, including regions where armed terrorist groups are operating.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic stresses that it alone is responsible for protecting Syrians and keeping them safe. It has a constitutional duty under national legislation and international law to fight the terrorism of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front and associated entities and terrorist operatives with numerous names and allegiances. Counter-terrorism efforts are crucial for restoring security and stability and improving the humanitarian situation and living conditions.

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The Syrian Government reiterates that in the course of carrying out its counter-terrorism efforts, it has complied fully with the provisions of international law and international humanitarian law regarding the protection and security of civilians and the safety of civilian service facilities, such as hospitals and schools.

The Syrian Government is committed to the cessation of hostilities agreement that entered into force on 30 December 2016, and it condemns in the strongest possible terms the non-compliance of the armed terrorist groups and their backers. These groups have continued to violate the agreement, mounting attacks in numerous locations, firing shells, committing heinous crimes and carrying out suicide operations that have killed hundreds of Syrians and wounded hundreds more.

The Government of Syria is surprised that the report, which is supposed to discuss humanitarian suffering, focuses excessively on the political process and its prospects. Meanwhile, the report ignores essential issues directly related to the Syrian humanitarian situation such as the destruction and devastation wrought by the "international coalition", which has targeted Syrian infrastructure and killing of civilians. It also ignores the fact that terrorist groups have blocked humanitarian access and besieged certain areas from within, using civilians as human shields.

The Syrian Government reiterates that the Secretariat must choose information sources in a manner befitting the ostensible professionalism, objectivity and credibility of such reports. Thus it should not rely on the so-called "open source" information preferred by the report. Such information serves merely to misrepresent the Syrian Government and whitewash the terrorist organizations and their backers. It is disgraceful that such fake sources are integral to the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It is also disgraceful to see the celebration and promotion of bogus organizations, such as the White Helmets, that are associated with terrorist groups and Western intelligence agencies.

The Syrian Government stresses that the Secretariat must be accurate when discussing the Geneva negotiations, as the title that was agreed upon with the Special Envoy for the fourth basket is "counter-terrorism", and not the title contained in paragraph 3 of the report.

The Syrian Government reiterates that the report's description of the armed terrorist groups as the "non-State armed opposition" has no basis in law. The report's authors know full well that these groups are linked to the terrorist ISIL and Nusrah Front organizations. Their conduct in this regard distorts reality and violates United Nations resolutions on combating terrorism.

In paragraph 8 of the report, the Secretariat describes terrorist suicide attacks carried out by the Levant Liberation Organization, which has absorbed a number of terrorist groups, most notably the Nusrah Front. In the light of those facts, the Syrian Government once again calls on the Security Council to immediately add this organization and its subsidiary terrorist factions to the sanctions list of the Security Council committee established pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL and Al-Qaida and associated individuals and groups. Because the three Western permanent members of the Security Council have rejected requests for such listings, these terrorist groups have been able to grow and become a greater threat to international peace and security.

Paragraph 45 refers to an attack carried out by a "non-State armed opposition group" on an office of a national non-governmental organization operating south-east of the city of Idlib as it celebrated International Women's Day on 8 March. That incident confirms the Syrian Government's repeated warnings to the world

regarding the barbarian and inhuman ideology of the terrorist organizations, which the report insists on calling the "opposition".

The Syrian Government finds it deplorable that the report continues to promote "international coalition" operations and intentionally disregards the illegitimate nature of the coalition, which was established without the consent of the Syrian Government and without Security Council authorization. The report also ignores the loss of innocent civilian life due to such attacks and the enormous devastation and destruction to Syrian infrastructure such as dams, bridges, hospitals and schools. The attacks have also damaged the development gains made by the Syrian people and the economic resources that they need for rebuilding, most importantly oil and gas wells and the accompanying facilities and equipment.

The Syrian Government hopes that the Secretariat will carry out its duties impartially, in accordance with the Charter, by clearly and explicitly informing Member States and the international community of "international coalition" attacks and their catastrophic effects on Syrians. It must also call for the coalition States to be held accountable for the victims of their attacks. The Syrian Government has supplied adequate information on those attacks in official letters addressed to successive Presidents of the Security Council and the former Secretary-General. One of many such attacks, on the Badiyah school in the countryside in Raqqah governorate, killed more than 50 people including women and children (see S/2017/240). In another case, a number of employees and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent were killed while trying to reach and repair the Tabaqah Dam, which was at risk of collapse owing to a barbaric and unwarranted coalition air attack (see S/2017/257 and S/2017/319).

Regrettably, the Secretariat is attempting to legitimize the actions of the Turkish regime and its allied forces in Syria, even though such actions are blatant attacks on the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic and its territorial integrity. They are an egregious violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and their direct effect is to support the terrorists and prolong the crisis.

The Syrian Government rejects the references in paragraph 11 regarding government-allied militias, and stresses that Syrian Government forces cooperate with associated groups that help them to combat terrorism legally and legitimately.

The Syrian Government advises the Secretariat that the word "temporary" is no longer applicable to Turkey's closure of the Nusaybin border crossing in December 2015. The Erdoğan regime's true objective in closing this crossing is to increase the suffering of Syrian civilians in Hasakah governorate at a time while thousands of mercenaries and foreign terrorist fighters are crossing into Syria. The Syrian Government notes in this regard that it informed the Resident Coordinator that it consented to the reopening of the Nusaybin crossing provided that humanitarian assistance was brought through the crossing in coordination with the Syrian Government as represented by the Governor of Hasakah, and provided that such assistance was distributed through the relief subcommittee in Hasakah. However, the Turkish Government still refuses to respond to United Nations requests to open the border crossing, and the United Nations has not taken any serious action, in deference to the feelings of the Turkish regime.

The Government of Syria affirms that its liberation of the Khafsah region in the Aleppo countryside has done much to free area residents from terrorism and to restore the water supply to Aleppo's neighbourhoods.

The Syrian Government stresses that the United Nations must undertake humanitarian operations in Syria only in coordination with the Government of the

Syrian Arab Republic. It must not acquiesce to the demands of those parties described in the report as "local authorities" in carrying out such operations.

The Syrian Government is surprised that the authors of the report would attempt to interfere in the internal affairs related to the Syrian State's regulation of civil society organizations in accordance with its sovereign powers. Paragraph 43 expresses alarm at the Syrian Government's decision to revoke the licence of a civil society association that had broken the law. The Syrian Government asks the authors of the report to observe principles of professionalism and the rules that govern the work of United Nations staff.

Contrary to the claims contained in paragraph 31 of the report, the Syrian Government regularly approves the importation of medical supplies with inter-agency convoys, as well as requests submitted by United Nations organizations working in Syria.

The Syrian Government points out that it approved access for inter-agency aid convoys to 30 unstable regions as part of the United Nations plan for March. Five regions were excluded due to the presence of the terrorist group ISIL. However, the United Nations sent convoys to only eight regions and four towns (Fu'ah, Kafraya, Zabadani and Madaya). Aid convoys to certain areas were discontinued out of consideration for the safety and security of United Nations employees and humanitarian staff. The Syrian Government calls on the United Nations to provide funding that is real and not merely announced publicly, and that is substantial enough to finance response plans. It calls on the relevant United Nations staff to carry out their duties effectively to facilitate the convoys, adopt related measures at the appropriate time, and help the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society overcome logistic difficulties such as the scarcity of trucks and the fuel shortages caused by the unilateral coercive measures imposed on the Syrian people.

The Syrian Government is troubled by the inaccurate conclusion reached by the Secretariat in paragraph 51 regarding the situation in the neighbourhood of Wa'r in Homs city. It wishes to emphasize that it did not force residents to leave. A number of armed individuals and their family members made the decision to leave for Idlib and Jarabulus, where terrorist groups were established. They refused to regularize their situation and remain in the area. This agreement did much to restore security and stability to Homs and improved living conditions and the humanitarian situation.

Civilians in the towns of Kafraya and Fu'ah were being held in a stranglehold by warring terrorist groups, which were shelling them out of pure spite and hatred. In order to alleviate their suffering and spare their lives, the only option was to remove them in accordance with the Four Towns Agreement. The United Nations has been unable to mitigate their humanitarian suffering, except in one single case. The Syrian Government emphasizes that this evacuation is a temporary measure until stability and security are restored and the residents are able to return to their homes.

The Syrian Government once again calls on the Secretariat to provide information about the damage and the economic, social, humanitarian, and medical suffering borne by the Syrian people as a result of the unilateral coercive economic measures imposed by the United States of America, the European Union and other States on the sectors that provide basic services to the Syrian people. Such measures affect the services needed for relief operations, such as medical facilities, electricity, fuel, commerce, funding and financial transfers. The Syrian Government stresses that continued and deliberate disregard of this fundamental issue could be construed as support for violations of the Charter and relevant United Nations resolutions on the part of those State Governments imposing the unilateral economic, financial and

trade measures on Syria. Such unilateral coercive measures are illegitimate and should therefore be rescinded.

The Syrian Government reiterates its previous concerns regarding the appearance of erroneous information in the report. For example:

- To date, the Syrian Government has granted approval for 26 international non-governmental organizations (and not 17, according to the report) to carry out humanitarian and relief work in Syria. Those organizations have the facilities they need for their work in accordance with the legislation and laws in force in the Syrian Arab Republic.

- In 2016, the Syrian Government granted more than 1,400 entry visas to United Nations employees. In the month of March, it approved 25 requests for entry visas (and not 10 as stated in the report) and 99 requests for residence renewals (and not 49, as stated in the report). The Syrian Government also granted hundreds of entry visas to employees of the International Committee of the Red Cross, international non-governmental organizations and other international associations.

The Syrian Government rejects the Secretariat's continual promotion of cross-border assistance, and reiterates that such assistance is ineffective, given that most of it falls into the hands of armed terrorist groups deployed in the targeted areas. The notifications sent to the Syrian Government do not meet the minimum standard of credibility with regard to figures, data, number of beneficiaries and information on the parties that receive and distribute assistance to civilian beneficiaries.

The Syrian Government reiterates that the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic cannot carry out its duty, as it has not been able to verify to date that this cross-border assistance is reaching its rightful beneficiaries. It also notes that the Bab al-Hawa, Bab al-Salamah and Ramtha crossings are entry points for arms and materiel being smuggled to armed terrorist groups in Syria. The Syrian Government strongly rejects the report's continued bias in favour of Turkey and Jordan when discussing the delivery of cross-border assistance. The Syrian Government reiterates that the Syrian Arab Red Crescent stands ready to monitor the delivery of humanitarian assistance to its intended recipients, but the Secretariat has in the past rejected that proposal.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its long-standing position that the crisis in Syria requires a political solution based on dialogue among Syrians under Syrian leadership without foreign intervention and without preconditions. The Syrian Government emphasizes that it is fighting terrorism in order to arrive at a political solution and to ensure that greater quantities of humanitarian supplies can reach Syrians in need. It reminds the Secretariat that the success of the political process and any significant improvement in the humanitarian situation will depend, above all, on creating a climate conducive to a serious and non-politicized international and regional commitment to fighting terrorism and on an immediate end to the unilateral coercive economic measures being imposed on the Syrian people with no legal or moral basis. The Syrian Government has played a constructive role in the success of the Astana and Geneva meetings.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again calls on the Security Council to prevail on the States that support and finance armed terrorist groups to refrain from so doing, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on combating terrorism and the financing thereof, in particular resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015). Compliance with and enforcement of those resolutions is the key to resolving the situation in

Syria and delivering unprecedented humanitarian assistance to those in need in Syria.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Permanent Representative
Ambassador

United Nations A/71/890–S/2017/353

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
28 April 2017
English
Original: Spanish

General Assembly
Seventy-first session
Agenda item 58
Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Letter dated 25 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a resolution of the National Assembly of Ecuador expressing concern with regard to the continuing violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Sahrawi people and calling for implementation of Security Council resolution 690 (1991) concerning the establishment of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara and the organization of a referendum to allow the people of Western Sahara to exercise their right to self-determination (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate this letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 58, and of the Security Council, under the item entitled "The situation concerning Western Sahara".

(*Signed*) Horacio **Sevilla Borja**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Ecuador

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Annex to the letter dated 25 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

National Assembly of the Republic of Ecuador

The plenary,

Whereas

Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations states that it is a purpose of the United Nations to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;

The Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples solemnly proclaims the necessity of bringing to a speedy and unconditional end colonialism in all its forms and manifestations and declares that all peoples have the right to self-determination, whereby they may freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development, and that immediate steps shall be taken, in occupied territories or all other territories which have not yet attained independence, to transfer all powers to the peoples of those territories, without any conditions or reservations, in accordance with their freely expressed will and desire, without any distinction as to race, creed or colour, in order to enable them to enjoy complete independence and freedom;

On 30 August 1988, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro accepted the settlement proposals presented by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the then current Chairman of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity;

The Security Council, in its resolution 690 (1991) of 29 April 1991, decided to establish, under the authority of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, a United Nations mission to organize, in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, a referendum for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, in accordance with the report of the Secretary-General of 19 April 1991 (S/22464);

On 8 February 2006, the joint communiqué on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Ecuador and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic entered into force;

Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes the right to life, liberty and security of person, and article 9 establishes that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile;

It is the duty of States to condemn any subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation, in order to guarantee fundamental human rights, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, and reaffirm their commitment to global peace and cooperation;

On Friday, 18 March 2016, the Government of Morocco demanded the departure of the civilian component of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), which had been established following the approval by the Security Council of the report of the Secretary-General of 18 June 1990 (S/21360). The essential aim of the proposals by the Secretary-General of the United Nations is to enable the people of the Territory of Western Sahara to exercise their right to self-determination and independence, by organizing a transition period starting with the entry into force of the ceasefire and ending with the announcement of

the results of the referendum. So that a referendum may be organized, Morocco undertakes to effect an appropriate, substantial and phased reduction of its troops in Western Sahara;

In 2013, 25 persons were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 25 years to life imprisonment for the events that occurred in the Gdim Izik camp, located on the outskirts of Laayoune, the dismantling of which ended in the tragic killing of civilians in 2011. Since Tuesday, 1 March 2016, 13 of the 25 prisoners have gone on hunger strike in the Salé prison near Rabat, demanding their release;

In exercise of its constitutional and legal powers,

Hereby resolves to

Article 1 — Express concern about the ongoing subjugation of the Sahrawi people, the violation of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the illegal exploitation of their natural resources for over 40 years, which might well constitute a breach of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

Article 2 — Call for the implementation of Security Council resolution 690 (1991), by means of which the Security Council agreed to establish a United Nations mission to organize and ensure a referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara, thereby avoiding a possible return to war between the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and the Kingdom of Morocco. It is essential to respect the will, sovereign rights and desire of a people to obtain independence. Consequently, it is suggested that the referendum process in Western Sahara should be stepped up and completed, and that the mandate of MINURSO should include the monitoring and reporting of human rights violations in Sahrawi territory.

Article 3 — Support and express solidarity with the 25 political prisoners who were convicted because of their peaceful political activism and participation in the events that occurred in the Gdim Izik camp and who have been held under arbitrary detention for five and a half years, and call for their immediate release and that of all other Sahrawi political prisoners in Morocco.

Article 4 — Express solidarity with the struggle for liberation and self-determination maintained by the Sahrawi people since 1970. The Sahrawi civilian population fled the cities of Western Sahara to the areas controlled by the Frente Polisario and, for more than 40 years, approximately 200,000 people have lived in refugee camps in Tindouf in the Republic of Algeria, awaiting a referendum on self-determination. Currently, the Sahrawi people are largely dependent on international humanitarian aid for food.

Article 5 — Communicate the present resolution to the Embassy of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic in Ecuador, so that it can inform the authorities and people of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic thereof.

Done and signed at the headquarters of the National Assembly, located in the Quito Metropolitan District, Pichincha province, on 14 April 2016.

(*Signed*) Rosana **Alvarado Carrión**
First Vice-President
Acting President

(*Signed*) Libia **Rivas Ordóñez**
Secretary-General

United Nations S/2017/354

Security Council

Distr.: General
25 April 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 21 April 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the exchange of letters dated 11 September 2015 (S/2015/709) and 15 September 2015 (S/2015/710) between the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council on the appointment of Virginia Gamba (Argentina) as head of the independent, three-person leadership panel of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. I have further the honour to refer to Security Council resolution 2319 (2016), by which the Council decided to renew the mandate of the Mechanism, as set out in resolution 2235 (2015), for an additional period of one year.

Further to the appointment of Ms. Gamba as my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, effective 1 May 2017, following the usual consultations, and in coordination with the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, I should like to inform you of my intention to appoint Mr. Edmond Mulet (Guatemala) as head of the leadership panel of the Joint Investigative Mechanism. He will assume overall responsibility, with two deputies responsible for the political and investigative components, respectively. Mr. Mulet served most recently as Chef de Cabinet to Secretary-General Ban Ki moon.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

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United Nations S/2017/355

Security Council

Distr.: General
25 April 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 25 April 2017 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that your letter dated 21 April 2017 (S/2017/354) concerning your intention to appoint Edmond Mulet (Guatemala) as head of the leadership panel of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism has been brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council. They take note of the intention expressed in your letter.

(*Signed*) Nikki R. **Haley**
President of the Security Council

17-06663 (E) 260417

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United Nations S/2017/356

Security Council

Distr.: General
25 April 2017

Original: English

Identical letters dated 25 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am writing to you in your capacity as the president of the Security Council to once again alert the members of the Council to the dangerous and destabilizing actions of the Iranian proxy Hezbollah in our region.

Hezbollah, the internationally designated terror organization, continues unabated to build up its military infrastructure in the towns and villages of southern Lebanon, in clear violation of Security Council resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004).

The evidence of Hezbollah's continuous violations is mounting each day and is overwhelmingly apparent. In fact, it was reported that, on 20 April 2017, Hezbollah conducted a tour for dozens of journalists along the Lebanese side of the demarcation line between Lebanon and Israel. The journalists witnessed and took pictures of Hezbollah fighters in full military regalia stationed along the route, holding guns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers.

Following the incident, a statement to the media was made by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), saying that shortly before the media delegation reached the area that morning, the Lebanese army notified UNIFIL of a media tour along the Blue Line, without mentioning any other details.

This announcement clearly indicates that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) were aware of Hezbollah's intention to conduct this tour in advance and serves as alarming proof of the growing cooperation between Hezbollah and LAF.

It is extremely disturbing that armed Hezbollah militants feel free to move openly in the UNIFIL area of operation, without being challenged by UNIFIL or LAF personnel.

The well-documented and photographic proof of this blatant provocation once again verifies the maintenance of arms by Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, in clear violation of Security Council resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004). This recent report adds to other evidence that demonstrates Hezbollah's ongoing efforts in strengthening its military infrastructure in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah has been building up its arsenal by smuggling weapons from Syria into Lebanon; and according to recent publications utilizes weapons production factories built by Iran on Lebanese territory.

The results of Hezbollah's military build-up are evident — the terrorist organization has amassed over 150,000 rockets and missiles, positioning its arsenal

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in the midst of the civilian population throughout southern Lebanon. Today, more than two thirds of the civilian structures in the Shiite villages of southern Lebanon have become an integral part of Hezbollah's military array.

Lebanese President Michel Aoun stated in a recent interview that Hezbollah's weapons complement the action of the Lebanese army. Furthermore, the ministerial statement of the Lebanese Council of Ministers of 28 December 2016 emphasizes the right of Lebanese citizens to "resist" Israel.

It is thus evident that the Lebanese Government is not only failing to fulfil its obligations under Security Council resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004), but is in fact actively encouraging and legitimizing Hezbollah's activities in clear violation of these resolutions.

The worrisome trend of Hezbollah's continued military build-up has serious repercussions for the stability of the region, Lebanon's future and the ability of its Government to exercise full governance within its country.

The international community cannot continue to turn a blind eye to Hezbollah's flagrant violations of Security Council resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004). The Council must send a strong message to the Government of Lebanon and demand that it fully implement these resolutions, not only in word but in concrete action.

It is also imperative that reports presented by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of Council resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004) clearly represent the ongoing violations of the resolutions.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Danny **Danon**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

United Nations S/2017/357

Security Council

Distr.: General
25 April 2017

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2299 (2016)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Secretary Council resolution 2299 (2016), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every three months on progress made towards fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The report covers key developments related to Iraq and provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq since my last report (S/2017/75) and the briefing of my Special Representative to the Security Council on 2 February 2017.

II. Summary of key political developments pertaining to Iraq

A. Political situation

2. The Iraqi security forces, including the popular mobilization forces, the Peshmerga, and local fighters, with support from the international counter-Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) coalition, continued to make progress in the fight to liberate Mosul and Ninawa from ISIL following the liberation of eastern Mosul on 24 January. On 19 February, Prime Minister Al Abadi ordered the start of military operations to liberate western Mosul. With the support of the international counter-ISIL coalition, Iraqi security forces made advances, reaching old Mosul and liberating, by the end of March, about half of western Mosul.

3. In a statement on 22 March in Washington, D.C., the 68 members of the international counter-ISIL coalition commended their Iraqi partners, who have liberated more than 60 per cent of territory previously held by ISIL. Coalition members committed to continued military support to defeat ISIL. They underscored the need to protect civilians and to provide full and immediate humanitarian access to United Nations agencies and their partners. They emphasized stabilization support for the return of internally displaced persons and public safety in liberated areas. They stressed that long-term recovery would stem from good governance, the provision of services, and sound security arrangements for all communities. Coalition members expressed support for the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and for the efforts of the Government to enhance public services, reinforce inclusive governance, reduce corruption, decentralize designated federal

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authorities, ensure the rights of all Iraqi citizens and promote national and local reconciliation and accountability for crimes by ISIL.

4. At the meeting, Prime Minister Al Abadi argued against containing ISIL, stressing the need to completely eliminate it. He affirmed his Government's commitment to decentralization, economic reform, combating corruption and working with all Iraqis, including young people. He noted that the popular mobilization forces are now a part of Iraq's armed forces, and that the Popular Mobilization Commission Law brings fighters who have defended Iraq under the command and control of the State. He reiterated that the popular mobilization forces must not enter into elections and that no weapons must be outside the control of the Government.

5. During the visit of Prime Minister Al Abadi to the United States of America from 19 to 23 March, President Trump and the Prime Minister affirmed the commitment of their countries to a partnership aimed at rooting out terrorism and promoting security, political, economic, cultural and educational cooperation. In the joint readout from the meeting, it was stated that the security partnership was a vital component of the national security of both the United States and Iraq.

6. National reconciliation remained high on the political agenda of Iraq. Ammar al-Hakim, Chair of the National Alliance, visited the Kurdistan region of Iraq between 4 and 6 February. While there, he discussed the National Settlement Initiative of the National Alliance, as well as relations between the federal Government and the Kurdistan region of Iraq. He held meetings with the Kurdistan Regional President, Massoud Barzani, and the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani, the Secretary-General of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and former President of Iraq, Jalal Talabani, the politburo of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and representatives of the Movement for Change (Gorran).

7. On 20 February, Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr issued a statement detailing 29 recommendations for Iraq. The recommendations include language on national and community reconciliation, reconstruction, the return of displaced persons, fair treatment of detainees and the integration of the popular mobilization forces into the Iraqi security forces. The proposal also recommends the establishment of a body to investigate human rights violations and consider the issues of minorities, in coordination with specialized governmental and parliamentary institutions, in addition to forming an Iraqi relief committee that would have access to affected areas.

8. On 30 and 31 March, I visited Iraq. While there, I met with Prime Minister Al Abadi, the President of Iraq, Fuad Masum, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, President Barzani and Council of Representatives Speaker Salim al-Jubouri, among others. During my meetings, I discussed the ongoing operation in Mosul and the protection of civilians, national dialogue and reconciliation, relations between the Kurdistan region of Iraq and Baghdad and the rights of minorities, among other issues.

9. In my meeting with Speaker Al Jabouri and several other Sunni political leaders, I received a document from the Iraqi Forces Coalition outlining their vision for national reconciliation, namely, the Historic Settlement Initiative. Former Speaker Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, the Chair of the Committee tasked with preparing the document, expressed the hope that it would bring about a more inclusive State. He explained that the goal of the Historic Settlement Initiative was to build confidence and to facilitate a historic settlement. The same day, the Muttahidun Coalition, led by Vice-President Osama al-Nujaifi, issued a statement

rejecting the Historic Settlement Initiative, emphasizing that it did not include the views of all Sunnis.

10. The implementation of the Popular Mobilization Commission Law saw limited progress. On 9 March, the Council of Representatives adopted a non-binding resolution calling for wage parity among equivalent ranks in the popular mobilization forces and the Iraqi army, in accordance with the law. On 21 February, the Council of Ministers instructed the Department of Disarmament and Militia Integration of the Office of the Prime Minister to transfer elements formerly belonging to the Awakening Forces ("Al-Sahwa") to the popular mobilization forces or the Iraqi security forces and to conclude the Department's operations in October 2017, in line with the 2017 Federal Budget Law.

11. On 17 January, the Council of Ministers announced that Provincial and District Council elections would be held on 16 September 2017, based on the recommendation of the Independent High Electoral Commission. According to the Commission, the adoption by the Council of Representatives of an updated legal framework for Provincial and District Council elections was required by 15 March to allow adequate time for preparations, but that deadline lapsed without progress. Amendments to the Law on the Provincial and District Council Elections (Law No. 36 of 2008, as amended), the Law on the Independent High Electoral Commission (Law No. 11 of 2007) and the Law on the Council of Representatives Elections (Law No. 45 of 2013) remain under consideration by the Council of Representatives. On 9 February, the Council of Representatives appointed an internal, ad hoc commission in charge of selecting a new Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission after the term of the current Board ends on 20 September 2017. The Council of Representatives debated a postponement of the Provincial and District Council elections to 2018, in which case they would be held concurrently with parliamentary elections scheduled for April 2018.

12. Political parties maintained interest in the electoral calendar and the legal and institutional framework. On 8 February, thousands of protestors loyal to Muqtada al-Sadr demonstrated outside the Green Zone, calling for amendments to the legal framework and the dismissal of the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission. On 11 February, several thousand protestors tried to reach the perimeter of the Green Zone. In the ensuing violence, at least 4 people died and at least 25 were injured, prompting Prime Minister Al Abadi to order an investigation. Following Al-Sadr's subsequent calls for "silent demonstrations" to reiterate demands for electoral reform, additional peaceful protests took place on 17 February. On 24 March, Al-Sadr addressed another demonstration in Baghdad's Tahrir Square, calling for continued peaceful protests until demands for electoral reform were met.

13. Coordination and cooperation between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government continued in the ongoing Mosul military operation and the ensuing humanitarian challenges. Between 4 and 6 February, the President of Iraq, Fuad Masum, travelled to Erbil and Sulaymaniyah to meet President Barzani and former President Talabani, among others. Upcoming elections, regional and international political developments and relations between the federal Government and the Kurdistan region of Iraq were reportedly discussed.

14. On 7 and 8 March, Prime Minister Al Abadi visited Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, underscoring the need for national unity after the defeat of ISIL. After their meeting in Erbil, Prime Minister Al Abadi and President Barzani praised the unprecedented military cooperation between the Iraqi security forces and the Peshmerga. During a speech at the Sulaimani Forum on 8 March, Prime Minister Al Abadi re-emphasized

the need for national unity in "winning the peace". In Sulaymaniyah, he met with representatives of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and representatives of the Movement for Change (Gorran).

15. Key issues between Baghdad and Erbil remain outstanding, including managing security in liberated areas, oil exports, revenue-sharing, budget implementation of article 140 of the Constitution of Iraq and disputed internal boundaries. On 30 March, during my visit to Erbil, President Barzani stated the intention to hold a referendum on the status of the region in 2017. He added that while the aim was not to immediately declare independence, the result would show the world the will of the people. On 2 April, the leadership of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan agreed to form a joint committee to build consensus ahead of discussions with the federal Government.

16. On 2 March, the head of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan in Kirkuk told the media that he had ordered Peshmerga forces to enter a pumping facility of the State-run Northern Oil Company in Kirkuk and temporarily halt production. Tensions subsided during Prime Minister Al Abadi's visit to the Kurdistan region of Iraq, which was followed by an announcement by the federal Ministry of Oil that it had already increased the capacity of the Kirkuk oil refinery and would do so again before the end of the year.

17. At the request of the Governor of Kirkuk, Najmaldin Karim, on 14 March, the Kirkuk Provincial Council adopted on 28 March a decision to raise the flag of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, alongside the Iraqi flag, in front of local government buildings. A spokesperson for the federal Government and parliamentarians representing the Iraqi Turkmen Front called the act unconstitutional. On 21 March, UNAMI issued a press release expressing concern and cautioning against unilateral steps that jeopardized harmony among Kirkuk's many ethnic and religious groups. On 26 March, 50 civil society representatives protested peacefully against the public position of UNAMI in Erbil. The Head of the Department of Foreign Relations of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Falah Mustafa Bakir, also expressed concern about the stance of UNAMI during his meeting with my Special Representative. On 29 March, Turkmen minority representatives staged a peaceful protest in Kirkuk demanding that the Provincial Council decision of 28 March be rescinded. On 1 April, the Council of Representatives adopted a resolution to lower the Kurdistan region of Iraq flag at Kirkuk local government buildings, sparking reactions in Kirkuk, Erbil and Baghdad. On 3 April, Speaker Jubouri and President Masum, as well as my Special Representative, met separately with the heads of the Iraqi Kurdish parliamentary bloc to find a way forward. On 4 April, the Kirkuk Provincial Council voted in favour of rejecting the Council resolution.

18. On 5 and 6 April, a joint Kurdish Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan delegation visited Baghdad to hold separate meetings with Prime Minister Al Abadi, President Masum and Speaker Jubouri. The delegation included President Barzani's Chief of Staff, Fuad Hussein, Secretary of the Political Bureau of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, Fadel Mirani, and member of the Political Bureau of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Adnan Mufti. Relations between Erbil and Baghdad, political and security developments and efforts to solve economic and other matters pertaining to relations between Baghdad and Erbil were discussed.

19. Efforts to reactivate the Kurdistan Regional Parliament and secure a political agreement in the Kurdistan region of Iraq continued without results. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan finalized its road map for inter-party discussions. The Kurdistan Islamic Union, the Kurdistan Islamic Group and the Kurdistan Islamic Movement explored a joint proposal on a negotiated solution. The agenda for negotiations and its sequencing reportedly continued to pose challenges to further progress.

20. On 21 February, the Kurdistan Regional Government signed a deal with the oil company Rosneft. The Minister of Natural Resources of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Ashti Hawrami, stated that the two-year agreement would allow for debt repayment and infrastructure investment.

21. Iraqi authorities and staff of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) met in Amman, from 5 to 17 March, to discuss the 2017 consultation on article IV of the IMF Articles of Agreement and the second review of Iraq's 36-month Standby Arrangement approved by the IMF Executive Board on 7 July. In a statement, IMF noted the Government's fiscal adjustments, supported by the financial assistance of the international community, which have led to a narrowing of the country's current account deficit. In the statement, it was noted that real gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2016 was sustained at 11 per cent, but that the non-oil economy had experienced an 8 per cent contraction, owing to the conflict and the fiscal consolidation, and that fiscal pressures remained significant. On 13 March, the global credit rating agency Fitch changed its outlook on Iraq from "negative" to "stable" and affirmed its B- rating. During his visit to the United States, Prime Minister Al Abadi met with delegations from the World Bank and IMF; both expressed their commitment to continuing to support Iraq.

22. On 27 March, the Minister of Culture, Faryad Ruwandizi, welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 2347 (2017), in which the Council condemned the unlawful destruction of cultural heritage and the looting and smuggling of cultural property in the context of armed conflicts, notably by terrorist groups. The Minister advised that the resolution would facilitate the retrieval of artefacts smuggled out of Iraq by ISIL.

B. Mosul campaign: protection of civilians

23. After the retaking of eastern Mosul from ISIL, civilians and security forces there continued to be subjected to rocket, mortar and drone strikes by ISIL, which incurred casualties. There were unconfirmed reports that ISIL had carried out attacks, using weaponized chemical agents, in Mosul and surrounding areas, in which 2 civilians died and 21 others, mostly children, were allegedly wounded. Prime Minister Al Abadi described the reports on the use of chemical weapons as inaccurate. The Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations, Mohamed Ali Alhakim, also said there was no evidence of the use of chemical agents. The World Health Organization continued to work with the Department of Health and civil protection workers to ensure that people who might have been exposed to chemical agents were identified and treated.

24. During their advance on ISIL positions in western Mosul, Iraqi security forces continued to face heavy small arms, rocket and mortar fire, suicide car bombs, ambushes and sniper attacks by ISIL on a daily basis. ISIL continued to use civilians as human shields and to booby trap locations where civilians were being held with explosive devices, resulting in significant civilian casualties.

25. UNAMI received reports of civilian casualties resulting from operations by the security forces as well as air strikes carried out by Iraq and the international counter-ISIL coalition. Between 16 and 23 March, a number of air strikes on ISIL positions in western Mosul reportedly resulted in significant civilian casualties. On 17 March, an air strike targeted ISIL snipers and equipment located on and near a house in al-Jadidah/al-Risalah neighbourhoods in western Mosul. Witnesses told UNAMI that ISIL had forced 140 civilians to remain in the house as human shields, while its fighters launched sniper attacks from the roof and booby trapped the house with improvised explosive devices. As a result, at least 61 civilians were killed,

although other sources reported much higher casualties. The United States Central Command issued a statement on 26 March acknowledging that its forces had conducted air operations in the area on 17 March and that it had launched a formal Civilian Casualty Credibility Assessment to establish the facts of the incident. Prime Minister Al Abadi confirmed that Iraqi authorities had also opened an investigation into the incident.

26. On 20 March, an unattributed air strike targeted ISIL militants located on the roof of a house in Nabi Jarjees neighbourhood in western Mosul. The air strike killed 11 members of one family, including three children and two women, and wounded five others, including a child. Reportedly, ISIL had forced the civilians to stay in the house. On 22 March, an unattributed air strike hit a residential house in Rajm Hadid neighbourhood in western Mosul. ISIL was using the house to launch attacks on Iraqi security forces and had forced children and a number of adults to remain inside as human shields. The air strike killed a seven-year-old girl and trapped eight other children under the rubble, who were subsequently rescued.

27. The Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq issued a statement on 24 March underscoring the responsibility of all parties to do everything possible to protect civilians, including prohibition against the use of people as human shields and the indiscriminate use of firepower. On 28 March, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, stressed that, as ISIL intensified the use of civilians as human shields, the protection of civilians must remain paramount. Condemning ISIL for ruthlessly exploiting civilians, he cautioned that the conduct of air strikes on ISIL locations in such an environment might have a lethal and disproportionate impact on civilians. He urged Iraqi security forces and their coalition partners to ensure compliance with obligations under the international humanitarian law principle of precaution, to consider all tactical options with a view to avoiding civilian loss of life and to reduce the impact of operations on civilians to an absolute minimum.

28. On 3 April, commenting on the situation in Mosul, Prime Minister Al Abadi referred to the lack of capacity to accommodate all internally displaced persons seeking to leave Mosul. He urged residents to stay in their homes, highlighting the risk of their being attacked by ISIL or being used as human shields. Iraqi security forces dropped leaflets appealing to residents to stay in their homes and recommending that they maintain their distance from ISIL combat positions.

29. UNAMI received a small number of reports of violations committed by Iraqi forces, which it has referred to the Government for investigation. For example, 34 Sunnis fled from Tilkaif district, Ninawa governorate, to Mosul on 8 February, after a Christian commander belonging to the popular mobilization forces allegedly issued an ultimatum to vacate the district.

30. Preparations to liberate Tal Afar also progressed. Popular mobilization forces retained control of the major highway near Tal Afar that connects Mosul to Iraq's border with the Syrian Arab Republic and continued their operations west of the town to prevent the reopening of ISIL supply and escape routes.

31. ISIL retained control of Hawijah district in Kirkuk governorate and areas in western Anbar governorate and maintained a limited presence in Salah al-Din and Diyala governorates. On 15 February, an ISIL suicide vehicle-borne bomb killed at least 5 people and wounded 20 in the Habibiyah neighbourhood of Baghdad. On 16 February, another vehicle-borne bomb killed at least 51 civilians and injured at least 45 in Baghdad's Bayaa' neighbourhood. On 4 April, suicide bombers attacked police in Tikrit, and in the ensuing clashes, at least five ISIL militants were killed and dozens of police and civilians were killed or wounded.

32. On 24 February, the Iraqi air force conducted strikes against an ISIL target in the Syrian town of Abu Kamal, located approximately five kilometres from the Iraqi-Syrian border. Prime Minister Al Abadi stated that the air strikes in Abu Kamal and concurrent air strikes in the town of Husaybah, Anbar governorate, were in response to the ISIL attacks in the Habibiyah and Bayaa' neighbourhoods of Baghdad. The Iraqi Joint Operations Command confirmed that the Iraqi air strikes in Abu Kamal had been coordinated with the Syrian Arab Republic. On 8 March, Prime Minister Al Abadi emphasized the Syrian Government's consent to the strikes and pledged additional strikes on ISIL targets in the Syrian Arab Republic, should the security of Iraq be threatened.

33. On 3 March, media reported that clashes between Peshmerga forces, comprising Syrian Kurdish elements, and the Sinjar Resistance Units, a mostly Yazidi militia with connections to the Kurdistan Workers' Party, had erupted in Sinuni subdistrict of Ninawa governorate, south of Sinjar. The two sides reportedly quickly agreed on a ceasefire but tensions persist, raising concerns of another escalation. On 14 March, clashes broke out between Peshmerga forces and demonstrators supporting the Kurdistan Workers' Party in Khanasur town near Sinjar, which left 10 people injured and 1 dead. In a public statement, the Ministry of the Interior of the Kurdistan region of Iraq accused the Kurdistan Workers' Party of provoking the Peshmerga.

C. Regional and international developments

34. Iraq continued its engagement with regional countries, international organizations and the wider international community to promote political, military, humanitarian and economic cooperation. Prime Minister Al Abadi attended the 2017 Munich Security Conference held from 17 to 19 February, alongside President Barzani. Both thanked the international community for supporting Iraq's fight against terrorism and held a series of separate bilateral meetings with world leaders. On 26 and 27 February, President Barzani travelled to Turkey, where he met with the President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and the Prime Minister, Binali Yıldırım.

35. At the Summit meeting of the League of Arab States (LAS), held on 29 March in Jordan, Prime Minister Al Abadi met bilaterally with Arab counterparts to rally support for the fight against ISIL and for humanitarian, economic and development assistance to Iraq and to discuss regional cooperation between Iraq and other Arab countries. He reiterated the importance of supporting the national unity of Iraq and respecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity. In the final Summit statement, it was affirmed that the stability and territorial integrity of Iraq were cornerstones of Arab security. Following the visit on 25 February of the Saudi Minister for Foreign Affairs, Adel al-Jubeir, to Iraq, Prime Minister Al Abadi met with King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of Saudi Arabia on the margins of the LAS Summit. Saudi assistance for humanitarian and stabilization efforts in liberated areas and bilateral trade were among the key issues discussed.

36. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, participated in the thirty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council, in Geneva. Iraq currently serves as Deputy Chair of the Council.

37. Iraq received high-level visits from a number of international counter-ISIL coalition partners, including the United States, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Italy and Tunisia. Iraq also received high-level visits from the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

38. On 26 January, the Council of Ministers of Iraq discussed the terms of reference and endorsed the budget for the Iraq-Kuwait joint boundary technical

project, which had been previously formulated during a workshop hosted by the United Nations Secretariat in New York from 24 to 27 October 2016. Erroneous media reports on the discussion of the Council of Ministers caused domestic controversy over the Khor Abdullah waterway, part of Iraq's maritime border with Kuwait, but not a part of the joint boundary technical project. That led to public demonstrations. On 30 January, the Council of Representatives established an ad hoc committee on the Khor Abdullah waterway. On 10 February, while in Cairo, Speaker Jubouri discussed the issue with the Speaker of the National Assembly of Kuwait, Marzouq al-Ghanim, assuring him that Iraq was committed to good relations with its neighbour. During the workshop in October, Iraq and Kuwait had agreed that the confirmation of the project should be officially communicated to the Secretariat no later than 30 December 2016. The terms of reference have yet to be endorsed by the Council of Ministers.

39. On 14 March, Prime Minister Al Abadi spoke with Turkish Prime Minister Yıldırım about bilateral relations, the fight against ISIL and regional developments. Prime Minister Yıldırım confirmed that Ankara was working to assist displaced persons in Iraq. Prime Minister Al Abadi reiterated his long-standing call for the withdrawal of Turkish troops from Iraq. Turkish air strikes continued to target the Kurdistan Workers' Party in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, with at least 10 instances reported since 3 February. The Turkish authorities issued public statements expressing concern about the raising of the Kurdish flag in Kirkuk, noting that such action was not compatible with the Iraqi Constitution. The Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran also publicly raised concern.

40. On 16 December 2015, 27 Qatari nationals were abducted in Muthanna governorate. On 18 December, Prime Minister Al Abadi informed the Prime Minister of Qatar, Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al-Thani, that the Iraqi authorities were working to secure their release. On 21 April 2017, all the Qatari abductees were released to the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior and later handed over to an envoy from Qatar, who travelled with the abductees to Doha on the same day.

41. The Executive Order of the President of the United States of 27 January, which imposed temporary measures to restrict entry into the United States of citizens of seven countries, including Iraq, prompted unfavourable reactions in Iraq. Another Executive Order of the President of the United States, issued on 6 March, excluded Iraq from the list of countries affected, noting the positive steps taken by its Government. On 6 March, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq welcomed the exclusion of Iraq, adding that it reinforced the United States-Iraqi strategic alliance.

III. Update on the activities of the Mission and the United Nations country team

A. Political activities

42. My Special Representative continued his engagement with government officials, parliamentarians, representatives of political parties, women's groups, civil society and religious and community leaders to advance inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation in post-ISIL Iraq. He called for intensified efforts to overcome divisions ahead of the post-liberation phase, in order to strengthen political management and governance, combat corruption, improve public service delivery and protect human rights.

43. Referring to the National Settlement Initiative put forward by the National Alliance, my Special Representative continued to urge all Iraqi parties, representatives of Iraq's diverse communities, and civil society groups, including women and young people, to outline their vision for national reconciliation, as the Iraqi Forces Coalition had done in its Historic Settlement Initiative. He visited the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan and the United States to solicit support for Iraq.

44. In January, UNAMI launched a series of events called "Iraq: Youth and Coexistence", aiming to incorporate the voices and vision of Iraq's young generation in the national reconciliation process, with a view to building a united post-ISIL Iraq, based on the principles of equality, citizenship and peaceful coexistence. On 28 January, 18 February, 18 March, 25 March and 8 April, my Deputy Special Representative for Political and Electoral Affairs chaired youth forums in Basra, Erbil, Najaf, Baquba and Sulaymaniyah, respectively.

45. As the electoral process gets under way, UNAMI has engaged with the constitutional and political leaders of Iraq, the Independent High Electoral Commission and the Legal Committee of the Council of Representatives to discuss the electoral calendar and potential amendments to the electoral legal and institutional framework. My Special Representative has underlined that decisive actions are needed to allow for a timely holding of the elections, including parliamentary elections in April 2018.

46. After the violent demonstration in Baghdad on 11 February, UNAMI condemned the intimidation and threats of violence against the Independent High Electoral Commission, its staff and their families, while encouraging institutional and legal reforms. Further, the Government of Iraq was called upon to provide the current Commission with all necessary support and protection until it is replaced through existing legal and democratic mechanisms.

47. UNAMI continued to promote participation by women in the elections and the peacebuilding and reconciliation process, including the National Settlement Initiative and the Historic Settlement Initiative. The Mission engaged with the Iraqi National Reconciliation Commission to support the integration of gender perspectives into its work. On 20 March, UNAMI hosted a consultative forum with civil society organizations on the participation and representation of women in electoral processes.

48. In continued support for dialogue between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, UNAMI leadership met regularly with representatives of both Governments and with political parties. They urged political leaders in the Kurdistan region of Iraq to chart a way out of the political and constitutional crisis in the region.

49. My Special Representative travelled to Kirkuk on 15 March and underscored to Governor Najmaldin Karim the need to promote political dialogue and abstain from steps that would adversely affect the situation in the governorate. He highlighted the importance of close coordination between the local authorities and the United Nations on humanitarian, stabilization and development activities. They discussed preparations for Provincial Council elections in the governorate.

50. My Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura, visited Iraq from 28 February to 3 March, in the context of the implementation of the 2016 joint communiqué by Iraq and the United Nations on prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence. She met with senior political leaders in Baghdad, Erbil and Dahuk, religious leaders, civil society and service providers. In addition, my Special Representative for Iraq visited Shekhan, Ninawa governorate, on 14 March, where he met with Prince Tahsin Beg, spiritual leader of the Yazidis,

Baba Sheikh and other key community leaders. In follow-up to Security Council resolution 2299 (2016), UNAMI has appointed a Senior Women's Protection Adviser to strengthen capacity and support the Government's efforts to implement the joint communiqué. UNAMI continued to advocate for amendments to the family protection draft law in accordance with international standards, which is under consideration by the Council of Representatives.

B. Electoral assistance

51. Following the decision of the Council of Ministers that Provincial and District Council elections would be scheduled for 16 September 2017, the Independent Commission started preparatory activities, including electronic voter identification and electronic ballot counting, with technical support from UNAMI. As at 3 April, biometric data of more than 10 million voters, around 49 per cent of whom are women, had been collected and were being cross-checked, prior to finalizing the voters list. A separate process for the biometric registration of internally displaced persons continued. As at 2 April, the Commission had approved the registration of 24 political parties out of the 240 that had submitted their application for registration as at that date. The Commission also opened the process for the accreditation of agents and observers for the elections.

52. On 1 March, UNAMI invited the Chairs of both the Independent High Electoral Commission and the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission to provide a joint electoral briefing for the Erbil-based diplomatic community. The Chair of the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission emphasized the need for support by the international community. UNAMI confirmed that the memorandum of cooperation of 8 October 2015 between the Independent High Electoral Commission and the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission was the basis for extending United Nations support.

53. On 12 March, the Council of Representatives invited UNAMI to send a representative to the ad hoc parliamentary committee tasked with the selection of the next Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission. The Mission will participate in the process, in an advisory capacity. UNAMI also continued to engage with the relevant committees in the Council of Representatives on electoral reforms.

C. Human rights developments and activities

54. Armed conflict, terrorism and acts of violence continued to take a terrible toll on civilians. Between 3 February and 3 April 2017, at least 908 civilian men, women and children were killed and at least 1,163 wounded, bringing the total number of civilian casualties in Iraq since the beginning of the armed conflict in January 2014 to at least 80,521 (28,023 killed and 52,498 wounded).

55. UNAMI received innumerable reports of serious and systematic violations of international humanitarian law and gross abuses of human rights perpetrated by ISIL. The organization continued to use civilians and civilian infrastructure and private homes as shields. In contravention of international law, ISIL conducted organized terrorist activities directly targeting civilians. In addition, sources indicate that there may be 1,739 Yazidi women and girls who remain in ISIL enslavement.

56. ISIL continued to target civilians in areas retaken by Iraqi security forces, including through suicide attacks, indirect fire and weaponized drones. For example, on 10 February, two attacks by ISIL fighters wearing explosive vests targeted two

restaurants in eastern Mosul, killing at least 12 civilians and wounding at least 26. On 4 February, indirect fire hit a residential area in south-east Mosul, killing 12 civilians, including four women and two children. ISIL markedly increased the use of weaponized drones to target civilians in retaken areas of Mosul. For example, on 23 February, a drone attack in eastern Mosul killed 12 civilians and wounded 9 others.

57. On 5 March, ISIL forced some 50 civilians into a house in western Mosul and later used them as human shields. On 6 March, the Iraqi security forces rescued 48 civilians still kept in the house. ISIL punished civilians refusing to join the group. On 20 February, ISIL demolished five houses of civilians who refused to fight for the group. It continued to punish civilians accused of cooperating with Iraqi security forces. For example, on 11 February, ISIL reportedly abducted 10 men in Hawijah, Kirkuk governorate. On 2 March, ISIL militants publicly executed nine civilians in western Mosul.

58. ISIL claimed responsibility for attacks targeting civilians in areas other than Ninawa and Baghdad. The group also targeted Salah al-Din governorate. On 8 March, an attack by four individuals wearing explosive vests targeted a wedding in a village in the southern Bayji district, reportedly killing 27 people and wounding 23 others. On 15 March, a vehicle laden with explosives detonated in Tikrit, killing 8 civilians and injuring another 40, as well as three members of the Iraqi security forces.

59. On 9 February, Iraqi security forces discovered two mass graves in Rutbah, Anbar governorate, reportedly containing the remains of some 25 security force members and civilians killed by ISIL in 2014. On 25 and 26 February, an area close to Azba village, about 10 kilometres south of Mosul, was retaken. It contains a sinkhole where it is alleged by Iraqi security sources that ISIL has buried thousands of bodies. The site is surrounded by improvised explosive devices and booby traps and is not yet secure. As with other suspected mass grave sites, the number of victims and the details surrounding their murders can be determined only after systematic exhumation has taken place.

60. The Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, co-chaired by UNAMI and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), received reports of 92 incidents of violations against children, affecting 180 children, between 3 February and 6 April. At the time of reporting, 70 of those incidents, affecting 136 children, had been verified. Forty-nine of the verified incidents involved killing and maiming primarily in Ninawa governorate, with 60 children confirmed killed and 49 maimed. Twenty cases of recruitment and use by ISIL were also verified, while seven children were verified to have been abducted in Anbar. Two schools in Ninawa were confirmed to have been damaged as a result of conflict. UNAMI continues to advocate that the protection of civilians be at the forefront of the planning of military operations. Prime Minister Al Abadi has publicly reiterated his Government's commitment to the protection of civilians and to ensuring justice and accountability for human rights violations and abuses committed in relation to the conflict. Religious authorities have spoken out. In weekly sermons, the representative of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani stressed the importance of protecting civilians and minimizing damage to civilian property and called for humane and fair treatment of detainees. The Shia Endowment continued providing humanitarian relief to civilians affected by the fighting, while popular mobilization forces launched a campaign to provide humanitarian assistance to displaced persons from Mosul on 17 March.

61. UNAMI continued its support to the committee of experts appointed by the Council of Representatives to oversee the process of nominations for the new Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights. The United Nations is a full member of the

committee pursuant to the law establishing the Commission. Nominations closed in May 2016. Prior to the holding of candidate interviews in March 2017, members of the committee attempted to remove the United Nations representative from the committee, insisting that the United Nations was only an observer. The United Nations representative subsequently stopped attending the meetings of the committee and called on the Speaker of the Council of Representatives to suspend the work of the committee until the matter was resolved.

D. Humanitarian assistance, stabilization and development

62. An estimated 500,000 civilians are living under ISIL control in the western districts of Mosul and remain at extreme risk. At least half of them are children. Civilians who have fled the city report severe shortages of basic food, clean drinking water, fuel, medicine and infant formula. Fighting in the densely populated old city, where up to 400,000 reside, continues to be fierce. Three mobile trauma stabilization points are operating near the front lines and three field hospitals are treating injured civilians. Since military operations began on 17 October, over 6,000 wounded people have been sent to hospitals for trauma care. Two one-stop integrated service centres for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence have been established and mobile teams are providing psychosocial support and referrals for displaced women and girls who have survived gender-based violence.

63. Although the Iraqi security forces have committed to a humanitarian concept of operations, fighting in western Mosul has been more intense than in the east, with greater impact on civilians, in terms of displacement and destruction. By early April, close to 250,000 civilians had fled western Mosul; another 250,000 are likely to leave in the weeks ahead. The Ministry of Migration and Displacement and humanitarian partners will soon have up to 19 emergency camps and sites to receive newly displaced people, located east, south and north of Mosul. With displacement increasing, urgent efforts are under way to expand space in camps nearest to the city.

64. During the fighting in eastern Mosul, more than 550,000 civilians stayed in their homes. Of the more than 161,000 who fled, more than 90,000 have returned to their homes. The remaining 70,000 are housed in emergency sites and camps. Since October, partners have reached 1.8 million people from Mosul and its environs with emergency response packages, including both displaced people and people who were able to stay in their homes. UNICEF continues to truck more than 2.3 million litres of water daily into eastern Mosul. More than 673,000 people have received household kits, more than 1 million have received food parcels and 640,000 people have received medical care. Health partners have already set up four trauma stabilization points and two more are presently being established. A 50-bed field hospital has been opened outside of Hammam al-Alil. Markets and commercial routes have begun to reopen and 455 schools are now functioning.

65. The humanitarian operation in Iraq remains one of the largest and most complex in the world. As many as 11 million people are expected to require some form of humanitarian assistance in 2017, including more than 3 million currently displaced persons. Partners worry that as many as 1.2 million additional people may be forced to flee their homes during the year, depending on the intensity of the military campaigns to retake Mosul, Tal Afar, Hawijah and other areas. The Humanitarian Response Plan, which was launched in Brussels in December 2016, seeks $985 million to respond to the needs of the 6.2 million vulnerable Iraqis, including families returning in increasingly large numbers to retaken areas. Already more than 1.6 million people have returned to their communities but remain vulnerable to shocks, with many requiring humanitarian assistance.

66. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization continued to expand. By April 2017, more than 500 projects were under way or had been completed in 22 liberated towns and districts in Anbar, Ninawa, Salah al-Din and Diyala governorates. The projects rehabilitated basic grids, put people to work, helped businesses to reopen, boosted Government capacity and facilitated community-level reconciliation. More than 200 projects are under way in eastern Mosul and retaken areas in Ninawa, including the rehabilitation of water treatment plants, electrical substations, schools and health-care facilities. In preparation for the liberation of western Mosul, additional specialists have been recruited and supplies and equipment pre-positioned and readied for use. Medical equipment has already been supplied to health facilities treating injured civilians fleeing western Mosul. The first 45 projects under the expanded stabilization channel of the Funding Facility are under way. They are designed to rehabilitate medium-sized public institutions, which generate large numbers of jobs in liberated cities, and to stabilize the agricultural, transport and electrical corridors between districts. A pilot project to address the needs of women-headed households is being implemented in peri-urban areas, where local governments are concerned about possible reradicalization. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund and the International Organization for Migration are supporting programmes in retaken areas in the agriculture, health, education, livelihoods, youth, peacebuilding, management of gender-based violence and housing sectors. The United Nations Mine Action Service continued to provide coordination and technical advice to organizations working on protection issues and conducting survey, clearance and risk education. In support of stabilization, 1,350 explosive devices and homemade explosives were cleared from critical infrastructure. Furthermore, advocacy by the Mine Action Service resulted in an agreement to embed military engineers in civilian clearance teams, which will address the inability of civilian entities to conduct demolitions, and reduce the direct threat of explosive stockpiles.

67. Partners continued to support the Government to elaborate a new national development plan and Iraq's second poverty reduction strategy. In anticipation of a reconstruction conference after the liberation of Mosul, the United Nations country team commenced work on a recovery and resilience framework with integrated programmes in transitional justice, reconciliation, economic diversification, returns, security sector reform, the delivery of basic services, survivor support, governance and anti-corruption, and the prevention of violent extremism.

E. Security and operational issues

68. On 30 October 2016, the Department of Safety and Security activated an Iraq humanitarian support cell in Erbil, to support humanitarian and stabilization activities related to anti-ISIL operations in Ninawa. From 1 November 2016 to 23 February 2017, 170 missions were conducted, including 11 missions with very high residual risk and 159 missions with high residual risk. The United Nations security management system continued to work with Government authorities to ensure that security measures were in place during humanitarian and stabilization activities.

69. Construction and renovation in the integrated United Nations compound in Baghdad continue. Fifty-seven new accommodation units were added in Baghdad in January and 79 new accommodation units are projected to be completed in June 2017. Another 116 new accommodation units are scheduled for completion by

August 2018 and planning has commenced for 250 additional office spaces. In addition, the renovation of infrastructure, offices and other facilities is planned. As part of its greening initiatives, the Mission started producing 240 kWs of electricity on 28 February, through solar panels.

IV. Observations

70. During my visit to Iraq, I delivered a message of solidarity to the Iraqi people, Government and institutions as the country continues in its fight against terrorism. I called attention to the need to support internally displaced persons in Iraq during a visit to Hassan Sham camp. I welcomed the commitment of the country's leaders to civilian protection and national reconciliation and pledged the ongoing support of the United Nations as the Government seeks to bolster aid delivery to needy populations and rebuild Iraqi institutions. I also expressed the need to find an adequate mechanism of effective accountability for crimes committed by ISIL.

71. As the Iraqi forces continue their progress in their fight against ISIL, action that brings the country closer to long-term peace and stability is imperative. Dialogue, which results in inclusive political solutions, is critical. I therefore urge all of Iraq's main components, minority communities, religious and community leaders and civil society groups, including those representing women and young people, to engage in discussions to achieve an historic national settlement. Their own visions of national reconciliation, such as the National Settlement Initiative of the National Alliance and the Historic Settlement Initiative received from the Iraqi Forces Coalition, will be indispensable for creating a broad-based, representative debate about sustainable peace. Efforts by countries of the region and other international partners to support Iraq in this process are encouraged and welcome. The United Nations will continue to use its good offices and act as a facilitator, in coordination with the Government.

72. Progress towards national reconciliation will be vital in the aftermath of the liberation operations. Restoring peaceful coexistence among all components in Mosul and Ninawa governorates, including minority groups, is essential to instil country-wide confidence in the possibility and promise of a national settlement. All necessary actions should be taken to enable the safe and voluntary return of internally displaced persons, including from minority communities, and to protect fully their civil and political rights, including their enfranchisement in the forthcoming elections. I encourage the Government to continue its efforts to put in place effective governance and security arrangements in Ninawa governorate.

73. I call upon Iraqi leaders to put in place a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for elections and to conclude the selection of the incoming Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission in a timely and inclusive manner. The current Commission needs to expedite the registration of political parties. The United Nations will continue to provide technical assistance, as requested, and to promote inclusivity and the active participation of women in politics.

74. The stability and unity of Iraq hinge on the rule of law, based on a legal framework that upholds inclusiveness and equality. I urge the Government and the Council of Representatives to adopt the outstanding priority legislation, including the Justice and Accountability Law, the Anti-Terrorism Law, the Federation Council Law, the Provincial Powers Act and the Components' Rights Law.

75. As military operations wind down, Iraqis will expect concrete steps towards eradicating corruption, improving service delivery and decentralizing governance.

This will require vigorous cooperation among all stakeholders. The participation of women in all decision-making processes is vital.

76. The continued cooperation and coordination between the Iraqi security forces and the Peshmerga are welcome. A commitment to address all outstanding issues between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government is needed. The visit by Prime Minister Al Abadi to the Kurdistan region of Iraq is an encouraging step. Additional steps need to be taken to enhance dialogue, including on the management of security in liberated territories, oil exports, revenue-sharing, Peshmerga salaries, disputed internal boundaries and the return of internally displaced persons to their places of origin, in accordance with humanitarian and human rights principles.

77. I call upon the political leaders of the Kurdistan region of Iraq to redouble efforts to make substantial progress towards ending the political stalemate in the region, which has kept the Kurdistan Regional Parliament from convening since October 2015.

78. During my participation in the thirty-fourth Summit of LAS in Jordan, I welcomed the progress in retaking territories from ISIL and expressed readiness to cooperate with Prime Minister Al Abadi and all Iraqi leaders towards an inclusive system of governance in which all communities are represented, respected and safe. The visit to Baghdad by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia and the Prime Minister's meeting with the King of Saudi Arabia are of note, including the attendant steps to enhance cooperation, trade and investment. I commend efforts by the countries of the region to support Iraq and engage with the Government, including through the provision of humanitarian assistance, with full respect for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Government of Iraq is encouraged to expedite efforts for the Iraq-Kuwait joint boundary technical project, which was agreed last October, to start without further delay.

79. The protection of civilians is paramount to restoring sustainable peace and long-term stability in Iraq. Minority communities remain particularly vulnerable. I urge the Government and the international coalition to remain steadfast in their commitment to keep the protection of civilians at the centre of the military operations against ISIL, to keep their procedures and tactics under review with the aim of avoiding civilian casualties and to reduce the impact of operations on civilians to an absolute minimum. The appeal by religious authorities to prioritize the protection of civilians is welcome. Reports of forced evictions of civilians in liberated areas and the obstruction of the return of displaced persons to liberated areas are concerning. I urge the Government to investigate reported violations of humanitarian and human rights laws and norms, including with regard to detainees suspected of terrorism or support to ISIL, and to bring perpetrators to justice in an expeditious, transparent manner that upholds the rule of law and promotes reconciliation. Creating the conditions for a safe, voluntary and dignified return of internally displaced persons is critical.

80. The terrible toll on civilians exacted by armed conflict, terrorism and acts of violence is deplorable. Women and children continue to suffer disproportionately. ISIL continued to use civilians as human shields and to target civilians in retaken areas, including through suicide attacks, shelling and weaponized drones. ISIL continued to punish civilians for allegedly cooperating with Iraqi forces and claimed responsibility for mass-casualty attacks in areas other than Ninawa. As ISIL has lost territory, more mass graves have been uncovered, including in Ninawa, Anbar and Babil governorates. Reports were received of alleged use of weaponized chemical agents by ISIL. I am appalled by the group's organized, systematic and gross

violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and I strongly condemn the atrocities perpetrated by ISIL.

81. The commitment of the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence in Iraq, as expressed by the Prime Minister of Iraq and the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government to my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, during her visit to the country is welcome. I am encouraged by positive steps already taken to implement fully the joint communiqué on prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence in Iraq, including the appointment of high-level focal points to work together with the United Nations and the international community during the implementation phase.

82. While humanitarian agencies prepared for months prior to the Mosul operation, a crisis of this scale is nearly unmanageable. The Government and the United Nations have constructed 17 emergency sites around the city but space is limited and many, including all of the sites to the south, are already full. Humanitarian partners are working to expand space, but it is a race against time to ensure that camp expansion keeps pace with new displacements. If the number of civilians fleeing the city increases quickly, there will not be enough space. Humanitarian partners are working with the Government on a contingency plan to transfer people to 13 camps further away from Mosul, where space exists.

83. Continued stabilization activities through the UNDP Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization will be critical to consolidate military gains and to help to set the conditions for people's returns to their homes. This successful programme has disbursed or committed the majority of its funding, and current reserves and pledges will last until the end of April. To continue immediate stabilization activities, $500 million in new commitments will be needed, including $400 million for remaining phases in Mosul and $100 million for the 8 to 10 areas yet to be retaken.

84. Lastly, I would like to express my appreciation to my Special Representative for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, his two Deputies and all United Nations national and international staff, for their efforts to fulfil the United Nations mandate in Iraq under challenging circumstances.

United Nations S/2017/358

Security Council

Distr.: General
27 April 2017

Original: English

Identical letters dated 25 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am writing to you with regard to the letter dated 10 April 2017 from the representative of the Syrian regime.

Turkey categorically refutes, in their entirety, the fictitious allegations contained in the aforementioned letter and in the statements delivered by the representative of the Syrian regime at the Security Council meetings held on 12 April 2017. The regime, which continues its barbarous and systematical chemical weapons attacks on the Syrian people, lost its legitimacy long ago and is the very root cause of all the problems emanating from the Syrian conflict. Those accusations are yet another futile attempt by the regime to evade its responsibility and distort the facts.

The use of toxic chemicals as weapons constitutes a war crime, a crime against humanity and a violation of international law. It is a breach of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, to which Syria is a party, and defies the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Living up to its well-established record, the Syrian regime has refrained from fully declaring its chemical weapons stockpiles. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) points to gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the regime's declarations on its chemical weapons programme, while the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, building on OPCW fact-finding mission investigations, has found the regime responsible in at least three cases of chemical weapons use.

The systematic and repeated use of toxic chemicals by the Syrian regime is a reminder to the international community that, unless the perpetrators of those attacks are held accountable for their crimes, they will continue unabated.

In view of the Syrian regime's documented and continued non-compliance, we reiterate our call upon the Security Council to take measures against that regime under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

I should be grateful if the present letter would be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feridun H. **Sinirlioğlu**
Permanent Representative

17-06706 (E) 010517

Please recycle

United Nations S/2017/359

Security Council

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2 May 2017
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Original: Russian

Letter dated 25 April 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith humanitarian and information bulletins from the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period 21-25 April 2017 (see annex).

I should be grateful if this letter and its annex could be circulated as a Security Council document.

(*Signed*) P. **Iliichev**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

17-07051 (E) 030517 040517

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Annex to the letter dated 25 April 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Humanitarian bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (21 April 2017)

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by the Russian Federation

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides has carried out eight humanitarian operations in the following governorates: six in Aleppo, one in Dar'a and one in Suwayda'.

In Aleppo city, 2,500 portions of hot food, 150 food parcels and 1.8 tons of bread were distributed to residents of Zahra', Qatirji, Bab Qinasirin, Haydariyah and Muhammad Bak districts.

Residents of Izra' in Dar'a governorate received 500 food parcels.

Residents of Qanawat in Suwayda' governorate received 350 food parcels.

Over the past 24 hours, 3,500 residents have received humanitarian assistance.

In total, 6.1 tons of humanitarian cargo have been distributed to the population.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by international organizations

Russian aircraft parachuted 21 tons of humanitarian cargo (food parcels) to the city of Dayr al-Zawr, which were received by the Syrian authorities through the United Nations.

Information bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (22 April 2017)

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, two ceasefire agreements have been signed with Izra' and Shaqra in Dar'a governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 1,468.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire of 27 February 2016 is unchanged — it is still 143.

The number of populated areas which Syrian government forces have liberated from armed groups of the international terrorist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) since 1 January 2017 has increased to 228.

Over the past 24 hours, government forces have gained control of 6 square kilometres. A total area of 3,975 square kilometres has been liberated.

Observance of the ceasefire regime

At 0000 hours on 30 December 2016, a ceasefire came into force in accordance with the consolidated agreement on a comprehensive resolution of the Syrian crisis.

The number of Syrian opposition armed groups that have joined the ceasefire regime is unchanged — it is still 64.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the consolidated agreement has reported 14 violations in the following governorates: 8 in Damascus, 3 in Ladhiqiyah, 2 in Hama and 1 in Dar'a.

The Turkish representative office has reported 13 violations of the consolidated agreement in the following governorates: 5 in Damascus, 5 in Hama, 1 in Homs, 1 in Idlib and 1 in Ladhiqiyah.

The Russian representative office has not confirmed any of the 13 violations during its investigations of the incidents.

Information bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (23 April 2017)

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, no ceasefire agreements were signed with populated areas.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process remains unchanged at 1,468.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire of 27 February 2016 is unchanged — it is still 143.

The number of populated areas which Syrian government forces have liberated from armed groups of the international terrorist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) since 1 January 2017 has increased to 228.

The total area of territory that has fallen under the control of government forces is unchanged — it is still 3,975 square kilometres.

Observance of the ceasefire regime

At 0000 hours on 30 December 2016, a ceasefire came into force in accordance with the consolidated agreement on a comprehensive resolution of the Syrian crisis.

The number of Syrian opposition armed groups that have joined the ceasefire regime is unchanged — it is still 64.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the consolidated agreement has reported 14 violations in the following governorates: 6 in Damascus, 4 in Hama, 2 in Ladhiqiyah and 2 in Dar'a.

The Turkish representative office has reported 26 violations of the consolidated agreement in the following governorates: 13 in Aleppo, 6 in Damascus, 2 in Hama, 2 in Idlib, 2 in Dar'a and 1 in Homs.

The Russian representative office has not confirmed any of the 26 violations during its investigations of the incidents.

Humanitarian bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (23 April 2017)

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by the Russian Federation

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides has carried out eight humanitarian operations in the following governorates: six in Aleppo, one in Ladhiqiyah and one in Damascus.

In Aleppo city, 2,500 portions of hot food, 1 ton of bread and 150 food parcels were delivered to residents of Hamdaniyah, Muyassar, Shahba', Bayadin, Balat and Karm al-Da'da' districts.

Medicine and 350 food parcels were delivered to residents of Bambrah in Ladhiqiyah governorate and Qatana in Damascus governorate.

In total, 3.6 tons of humanitarian cargo have been distributed to the population.

Over the past 24 hours, humanitarian assistance has been provided to 3,000 residents.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by international organizations

Over the past 24 hours, the United Nations and partners have continued to provide medical, psychological and legal assistance to the Syrian Arab Republic. Work is also still under way to restore infrastructure and provide temporary accommodation to those in need.

Information bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (24 April 2017)

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, two ceasefire agreements have been signed with Sahliyah and Daliyah in Dar'a governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 1,470.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire of 27 February 2016 is unchanged — it is still 143.

The number of populated areas which Syrian government forces have liberated from armed groups of the international terrorist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) since 1 January 2017 has increased to 231.

Over the past 24 hours, government forces have gained control of 38.5 square kilometres. A total area of 4,013.5 square kilometres has been liberated.

Observance of the ceasefire regime

At 0000 hours on 30 December 2016, a ceasefire came into force in accordance with the consolidated agreement on a comprehensive resolution of the Syrian crisis.

The number of Syrian opposition armed groups that have joined the ceasefire regime is unchanged — it is still 64.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the consolidated agreement has reported 11 violations in the following governorates: 7 in Damascus, 3 in Hama and 1 in Ladhiqiyah.

The Turkish representative office has reported 10 violations of the consolidated agreement in the following governorates: 4 in Hama, 3 in Aleppo, 1 in Damascus, 1 in Idlib and 1 in Ladhiqiyah.

The Russian representative office has not confirmed any of the 10 violations during its investigations of the incidents.

Humanitarian bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (24 April 2017)

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by the Russian Federation

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides has carried out eight humanitarian operations: seven in Aleppo governorate and one in Ladhiqiyah governorate.

In Aleppo city, 7.2 tons of bottled drinking water and 200 food parcels were distributed to residents of New Aleppo, Central, Sadd al-Lawz, Kawakibi, Shaykh Faris, Dhahabiyah and Ansari districts.

In Ladhiqiyah city, 3.5 tons of food products were delivered to a refugee camp.

In total, 11.8 tons of humanitarian cargo have been distributed to the population.

Over the past 24 hours, humanitarian assistance has been provided to 3,725 residents.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by international organizations

Russian aircraft parachuted 21 tons of humanitarian cargo (food parcels) to the city of Dayr al-Zawr, which were received by the Syrian authorities through the United Nations.

Information bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (25 April 2017)

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, no ceasefire agreements were signed with populated areas.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process remains unchanged at 1,470.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire of 27 February 2016 is unchanged — it is still 143.

The number of populated areas which Syrian government forces have liberated from armed groups of the international terrorist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) since 1 January 2017 has increased to 233.

Over the past 24 hours, government forces have gained control of 294 square kilometres. A total area of 4,307.5 square kilometres has been liberated.

Observance of the ceasefire regime

At 0000 hours on 30 December 2016, a ceasefire came into force in accordance with the consolidated agreement on a comprehensive resolution of the Syrian crisis.

The number of Syrian opposition armed groups that have joined the ceasefire regime is unchanged — it is still 64.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the consolidated agreement has reported 16 violations in the following governorates: 11 in Damascus, 3 in Ladhiqiyah, 1 in Dar'a and 1 in Hama.

The Turkish representative office has reported 13 violations of the consolidated agreement in the following governorates: 3 in Damascus, 3 in Dar'a, 3 in Hama, 2 in Aleppo and 2 in Idlib.

The Russian representative office has not confirmed any of the 13 violations during its investigations of the incidents.

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Letter dated 25 April 2017 from the Chair a.i. of the Governing Council of the United Nations Compensation Commission addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the Governing Council of the United Nations Compensation Commission, I am pleased to provide a report on the results of the eighty-second session of the Council, which was held in Geneva on 24 April 2017. The full text of the conclusions adopted by the Governing Council, together with additional documentation, is attached.[1] I would, however, like to highlight a few of the issues discussed during the session.

Since the departure of Spain as President of the Governing Council at the end of 2016, the position is currently vacant. As there were no nominations for President at the eighty-second session, the United Kingdom agreed to preside over that session and Egypt has kindly agreed to preside over the eighty-third session. It remains the preference of the Governing Council to maintain the established practice of presidents serving two-year terms for the purposes of continuity. However, subsequent to the eighty-third session, the Governing Council will align its presidency with that of the Security Council pending the nomination of a president.

During the opening plenary meeting, delegations from the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait, including a delegation from the Committee of Financial Experts, which is responsible for the oversight of Iraqi oil revenues, addressed the Council.

At the session, the Council considered the issue of the future options for ensuring the timely completion of the Commission's mandate. It recalled that, in its decisions 272 (2014), 273 (2015) and 274 (2016), the Council had emphasized the importance of Iraq fulfilling its obligations and completing the payment of the outstanding compensation in a timely manner and the importance of maintaining the integrity of the Commission and bringing its mandate to a conclusion. The Council further recalled that, in its decision 274 (2016), the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait had been encouraged to collaborate on future options to be shared with the Secretariat for inclusion in its report to the Council.

While Iraq and Kuwait have not yet met to discuss detailed options for consideration by the Governing Council, the Council welcomed confirmation in the statements made by both delegations at the opening plenary that a first meeting would be held in mid-May 2017.

[1] Not included in the present letter.

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The Council will continue to evaluate the options and, in parallel, the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait are strongly encouraged to collaborate on detailed options that would ensure the timely completion of the Commission's mandate and report back to the Secretariat in advance of the Council's next informal Working Group meeting, scheduled to be held in late May 2017.

The Council also directed the Secretariat to follow up with the International Monetary Fund to determine whether its standby agreement with Iraq would have any impact on the resumption of deposits to the United Nations Compensation Fund in 2018 and report back to the Council.

With regard to the request of Iraq for access to the Commission's archives, the Council took note of the statements made by the delegation of Iraq at the opening plenary session and reaffirmed its previous positions regarding the request.

The next session of the Governing Council has been tentatively scheduled for 2 and 3 October 2017.

(*Signed*) Mark **Matthews**
Ambassador
On behalf of the Governing Council